

Members of the City Council, residents, executive staff, city employees:

It is an honor to stand before you as your relatively new mayor to share a few words this evening about the state of our city. As your mayor, and as a city council, you will see us this year embrace new ways to reach out more often, to communicate more effectively, and to serve you better. To this end, the city has begun using social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter to share our messages, to listen, and to stay in touch with our stakeholders. This month, we've also implemented a program where for the first time service requests can be made online. Whether it is needing a pothole filled, solving a problem with garbage pick-up, or fixing a broken street light, these can now all be brought to our attention through an easy button on our city's homepage. If you ever need to speak directly to me, your mayor, my cell phone number and personal email address are also on the city website.

It is in this spirit of openness and transparency that I look forward to beginning the tradition of an annual State of the City address with you tonight. While the president's State of the Union speech and the governor's State of the State address have long been part of our annual calendar, we have not heretofore established—as many larger cities have—the practice of making an annual report in this format. So I applaud us all tonight for participating in this historic occasion. We set time aside this evening not just to hear a speech, but we pause to commemorate the progress Utah's second largest city has made, and to imagine how together we will engage the threats and opportunities that await us this year.

West Valley City is a maturing municipality, with a 30th birthday looming this summer. We stand on the edge of a new decade with storm clouds above us, but with sunshine shimmering in the distance. The Great Recession has rocked the economies of nation, state, and city; but with one of the best balanced allocation of revenues of any city in the state, West Valley City is weathering the storm better than most. Like a diversified stock portfolio, our risk is spread out among different sources. One-third of our city revenues come from the stable property tax; one-third from a relatively steady bundle of user fees, franchise taxes, and miscellany; but the final third comes from the volatile sales tax—where we are seeing a drop of 17% from one year ago.

Yes, it could be much worse, but the damage is still brutal: we need to come up with about \$4.5 million dollars before the fiscal year ends June 30. In the 2011 fiscal year, which begins July 1, we are estimating being short another \$6.5 million dollars or so. Our city manager noted last weekend that of all of the budgets he's seen in the dozen years that he has been here, this is by far the ugliest.

To the credit of our tremendous city manager, Wayne Pyle, and his gifted staff, we are already well under way with the process of trimming our sails, making do with what we have, and

weathering through the rocky shoals. The good news is we have been able to maintain our city operations and to avoid any layoffs, and we are hopeful that we can continue forward without layoffs and without contributing to the horrific specter of the growing lines of our nation's unemployed. The bad news is that achieving that benchmark, and filling the deep holes our budget shortfalls find us in, is painful and is requiring difficult choices. Our hard working employees are heading into a third straight year without cost-of-living or even merit wage increases. Through attrition and hiring freezes of some sort, each city department is being called upon to do more with less. The holiday parties are long gone, the tuition reimbursement program is only a memory of years ago, and travel and training opportunities have been greatly slashed. The private sector, the county, the state, and other agencies have had to do much to tighten their belts and make it through this rugged economic terrain, and make no mistake: West Valley City is feeling that pain with you—tightening our belts, patching holes in our budget, and somehow making it work; all without increasing taxes.

But despite the challenging hand we've been dealt, West Valley City is playing its cards very well; and I am extremely proud of the responsible way in which our city's elected officials and staff have managed the public's money. We have built up in reserves through the good years a fund balance of seven million dollars, which is helping us through these rainy years, and cushioning us in case the markets stumble once again. Quite unlike the federal government, West Valley City has been steadily paying down its debt over the past five years, and our prudence was rewarded last year with our bond rating being upgraded to AA by Standard and Poor's. The improved rating has allowed us to refinance much of the debt the city does have at lower interest rates, saving the taxpayers millions. It is the intent of the city's elected officials and staff to continue this fiscally conservative path in the months and years ahead.

I am extremely proud of the West Valley City Police Department, who are working hard and working smart to protect our residents and businesses. Many even in our own community don't realize that total calls for police services, serious crime, and gang crime have all been declining for three straight years—four years in the case of gang crime. Homicides last year were at 36% of the 2005 level, for example. Plenty of cities in this state, and most of the cities in the country now have crime rates higher than West Valley City. Yes, individual incidents sometimes get abundant news coverage, but don't let the sensationalism fool you into thinking that the overall trends are going the wrong way. West Valley is becoming a safer place each year. Our police response times decreased last year, and our officers made enormous strides in reducing speeding throughout our neighborhoods. In fact, the number of traffic accidents in the city's top ten intersections dropped 37% last year due to a beefed up focus by our city's police officers.

Our calls for fire service remain high—nearly double the number of West Jordan’s and over 60% more than Sandy’s. Yet our response times have been improving, and our fire fighters have shortened the time from dispatch to arrival by 9% since 2007. The seven year experiment of the city providing its own emergency ambulance service is proving to be a success, as well; and we responded to nearly 7,300 medical calls last year, were able to serve these people more efficiently and less expensively than before, all part of a program that is revenue neutral to the taxpayer.

I am proud of our city’s Legal Department, which has provided the leadership in our Good Landlord Program, where we now have 300 landlords enrolled, representing 6,700 rental units, and seeing reduced crime among its members. In the Arlington Park complex, for example, we’ve seen the crime rate drop 65% through city staff efforts. The Legal team is making their offices paperless and increasing their efficiency so that they can continue to accomplish more with less. They even aid in the city’s collections efforts, bringing in a quarter of a million dollars in 2009.

Our Public Works Department is leading the way in leveraging the city’s \$1.1 million dollar Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant to convert lighting in city facilities and parking lots to greener LED systems that will save the city money for years to come, and waste less electricity. They are efficiently managing the city fleet, shoveling snow, repairing roads, and building new sidewalks as funds are available. One of their many achievements this past year was working with the residents of the Diamond Summit neighborhood to enact a successful traffic calming program.

Last year our new Community Preservation Department moved into a new \$5.5 million dollar headquarters, which also includes the city’s new animal shelter—a joint project with our neighboring city, Taylorsville. The previous animal shelter was the oldest one in operation in the state, and sorely needed to be replaced. This department has also led a 63% decrease in graffiti along the city’s major corridors and a 51% decrease in neighborhood code enforcement violations. Our residents have long asked the city to help clean up their neighborhoods, and we are seeing terrific results!

The Community and Economic Development Department saw a new director, Nicole Cottle, appointed this year, and their accomplishments are the envy of communities around the state. They worked to bring in over \$20 million in new capital investment in the city, new sales tax of \$800,000 and the creation of 365 new jobs—all in a down economy. Holiday Inn and Staybridge Suites added to the hospitality industry near the E-Center, WinCo entered the grocery industry in Utah here, and Cummins Rocky Mountain was a welcome addition. Much of the focus has been on the redeveloped Valley Fair Mall, where we broke ground on the \$15 million dollar Phase 2 just last month. New stores and restaurants have arrived, including Olive

Garden, TGI Friday's, and Smashburger. When the mall redevelopment is complete it will have grown from a center valued at \$35 million, to one valued at \$130 million. It will go from an employer of 900, to an employer of 2,300. With 3500 South widened this past year, and TRAX light rail set for completion a year or so from now, West Valley's city center is shaping up to be one of the prime commercial hot spots in the state. The transit intermodal center just west of city hall opened up last year, and creative additions to the plaza there are on tap for the coming year.

The city's Utah Cultural Celebration Center continues to wow visitors with its diverse programs. This past year the art gallery at the UCCC was given a four-star international classification by the National Gallery and Museum Association, and a fully equipped stage was completed. Dignitaries from Japan, Mexico, Peru, China, Samoa, Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan and Chile participated in events there, as did Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Shakespeare troupes, the Utah Symphony, dancers from Romania, Germany, and Russia, and the popular ARTrageous program delighted visitors—which totaled over 44,000 last year.

In a time when the exotic vacation is less accessible for many residents, recreation amenities closer to home are more important than ever. I am proud of our Parks and Recreation Department that has maintained their facilities with efficiency. We are a water-wise city, that used only 28 inches of water per acre last summer in watering city green spaces at a time when the valley's average residential use was over 50 inches. Our Harman Senior Center has patron satisfaction levels at 98%, our West Fest 5K run and annual Turkey Trot have seen a 33% increase in runners in one year, our Family Fitness Center has a customer satisfaction level at 95% (up from 75% the previous year), and over 95% of our golf course visitors rank West Ridge and Stonebridge as equal or better than other courses. We even opened up the city's 21st park last year: Terrace Ridge Park, which has incomparable views of the Salt Lake Valley. But there is more we must still do. We need to make sure we have green spaces as part of our planned city center development. We need to make sure new subdivisions on the west side of our city get the parks promised to them, and we need to find a way to build out the city's trail system for the benefit of those who bike to work, walk to school, or who need safe places to exercise.

This has been a banner year in many ways, with Hale Centre Theatre becoming the highest attended cultural event in the Intermountain West, the E-Center and USANA Amphitheater continuing to host world class concerts and events, and West Valley City becoming home to the Days of '47 rodeo—a longtime Utah tradition.

We realize that West Valley City is more than just the departments of city hall. We are a municipality enriched with diverse religious, ethnic, and education communities, and we want to reach out to them in unprecedented ways this year.

Using the convening authority I hold as mayor, I hereby invite religious leaders from throughout our city to gather for our first ever summit of religious leaders in April. I invite every pastor, priest, imam, stake president, and rabbi to join city leaders for a discussion of ways we can better coordinate emergency preparedness and response; to plan how we can encourage every member of their congregation to participate in Census 2010; to explore how we can leverage their leadership to increase the quantity and quality of our neighborhood associations; and to listen to how city hall can better help them with the challenges their congregations face.

We are a city that has become the most ethnically diverse in the state. Over 45% of our city residents are ethnic minorities. Our city is a more enriched community because of this, and our children will be better prepared than most for an increasingly diverse 21st century America. However, such diversity also brings challenges. Language barriers, different customs, confusion about legal status and even racism can make coexisting as neighbors challenging. I want to have a frank and candid discussion with leaders of ethnic groups about what we as city leaders can do to help make our diverse experience in West Valley City more harmonious; how we can together bridge misunderstandings and fight stereotypes and distrust. To this end, I invite the leaders of our many ethnic groups to join us for our first ever summit of ethnic leaders in June.

Finally, as city leaders we care deeply about the education of our young people. We value the three charter schools in our city. We appreciate our partnership with Granite School District, which is better than ever. We look forward to continuing to work with them on the construction of a new Granger High School and other new schools as our city's population grows to the west. Yet we are concerned when we look at test scores, graduation rates, and college achievement levels in our city. We are encouraged by the success of after school programs and our student recognition program, but wonder if there is more that we can do as city leaders to better support the education of our young people in West Valley City. To this end, I invite educators, district officials, PTA leaders and others to our first ever West Valley City education forum this August. We look forward to meeting with you to discuss the challenges being faced by students in West Valley City, and what specifics we can do together as a community to help them improve.

In conclusion, I am bullish about the future of West Valley City. Residents can take great pride in a well run city, staffed with honest, hard working and talented employees. In a time when most cities around the country are dealing with a drought in new development, we are still holding ground breakings and ribbon cuttings. We are seeing cultural, recreational, dining and shopping opportunities grow. We have solid, salt-of-the-earth families who have been with us for decades, and we have new families and professionals moving in.

The state of our city is good. As I said in the beginning, there may be economic storm clouds above us today, but a bright and shining future lies ahead. May God continue to bless us as we build and protect our first class city.